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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000420

SIPDIS

CAIRO FOR MAXSTADT

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: POLITICAL ROUNDUP FEBRUARY 28

Ref: a) Abuja 404
b) Abuja 291

Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter. Reason: 1.5
(b)and(d).

1. (U) This periodic joint political report from Abuja and Lagos includes:

- Political Violence Update
- Potential Party Coalition
- Will AD Support Obasanjo?
- ID Card Registration
- Sharia Amputation in Jigawa
- Traditional Ruler to be Prosecuted

Political Violence Update

2. (SBU) The convention honeymoon, a period of time with little to no violence, is over. An upswing in violence throughout the country is now reaching levels we had anticipated earlier. Ref A details much of the last three weeks of violence in Kwara State. In addition, there are reports of as many as 45 persons killed and scores of homes destroyed in Warri in Delta State in two separate waves of violence two weeks apart. In Benue at least 7 persons were killed in ANPP-PDP clashes that started on February 18, apparently related to local government elections. Sporadic violence, including the burning of homes and offices, continued for 4 days. Seven people not indigenous to the area, an ex-LGA chairman, and two chairmanship candidates were arrested.

3. (SBU) In Owerri, Imo State, Theodore Emeka Agwatu, Governor Udenwa's Principal Secretary, was murdered on February 23. His death follows that of ANPP senatorial candidate Ogonnaya Chijioke Uche, who died February 10 from gunshot wounds received three days before. Motives for Agwatu's death remain unclear. Uche's death is "being investigated" by the police, who privately blame it on an internal ANPP feud. Police deny initial press reports that the case was being treated as an armed robbery gone bad, although they have not ruled out that possibility. ANPP has publicly offered 2 million naira for information on the culprit; the police have a similar reward of 100,000 naira. Uche defected from the PDP in 2002 and was the immediate past Commissioner for Lands, Survey, and Urban Planning in Udenwa's government. His wife and brother reportedly were "shot at but not hit" the day after Uche was attacked.

4. (C) COMMENT: Not all this violence is directly tied to elections and electoral politics. The fighting in Warri has more to do with a struggle between two local power brokers.
END COMMENT.

POTENTIAL PARTY COALITION

5. (SBU) There have been at least two other meetings between representatives of the majority of new parties since Ref B, but with no resolution. Dr. Alex Ekwueme, the defeated PDP candidate and one of the only people most feel would have a chance against Obasanjo, has not indicated that he is willing to leave the PDP. Ekwueme continues to fight the PDP's nomination of Obasanjo in court, even though his original suit was thrown out on a technicality. Chief Gani Fawehinmi, candidate for the PRP, has been talking to the press about the possibility of his taking on the role of coalition candidate, but up to the meeting held on February 27 there has been no public backing of his candidature by the other parties. Gani's best chance to get the nod is that, after Alex Ekwueme, he has the highest name

recognition value countrywide of any possible coalition candidates.

WILL AD SUPPORT OBASANJO?

16. (C) As noted in Ref B, in the end, the AD will likely support Obasanjo. Numerous "secret" meetings have been held between Obasanjo's camp and that of various factions within the AD. Some factions within the party are still holding out against the alliance and have railed against the party leadership for not choosing their own candidate before the INEC presidential deadline February 21. The decision is dragging out and any indication from the PDP that they will contest against incumbent AD governors could limit the level of support the AD party structure is able to offer to Obasanjo.

ID Card Registration

17. (C) The National ID Card registration period has started, with many of the same problems seen during the voter registration process. After the scheduled two weeks, a reported 24 million people have been registered, and the program has already been extended for an additional two weeks. The process has been marred by numerous stumbling blocks: limitations on the computerized photograph storage to 500 pictures at a time, accusations of bribery and the selling of cards, and strikes by registration workers over lack of pay, to name a few. In addition, there have been problems in some Muslim communities with women not willing to remove facial coverings for pictures, and a mistaken belief that the traditional henna painting of fingertips precludes taking thumbprints. A suit has been filed over the process, which is registering only citizens over the age of 18 rather than 10 years and up as required by the implementing legislation.

18. (C) COMMENT: The National ID Card is unlikely to provide results any more accurate or reliable than the discredited voter registration process a few months ago. Besides people being turned away from registration for not knowing their blood type or having fingers roughened from labor in the fields or even having an anglicized surname, there seems to be some public resistance to the program that will likely skew results further. That said, it has taken more than 20 years and hundreds of millions of dollars to begin this National I.D. Card program, which seems to be broadly accepted throughout Nigeria, even in the North which has traditionally viewed this exercise as a way of undercounting Northern Nigerians and thereby diminishing their influence and resource entitlement in Nigeria.
END COMMENT.

Sharia Amputation in Jigawa

19. (U) International, but not local, press have reported a man in Jigawa State being sentenced by a Sharia court to a cross amputation (right hand and left leg) for stealing. Haruna Mohammed, a 35-year-old man, was convicted of stealing 86,000 naira (USD 630) February 20 and was given 30 days to appeal the sentence. His lawyers appealed the following day. We have not been able to independently confirm this sentence.

Traditional Ruler to be Prosecuted

10. (SBU) In a follow-up to an event reported in the Human Rights Report for the last two years, the Kaduna State Government has filed charges against a traditional ruler and 6 others for actions during the riots in Kaduna in October 2001. Alhaji Ahmadu Mohammed Yakubu, the Sarkin Numana, will be tried on a count of "inciting disturbance," while the others are being indicted on heavier counts of criminal conspiracy, unlawful assembly, and rioting.
JETER